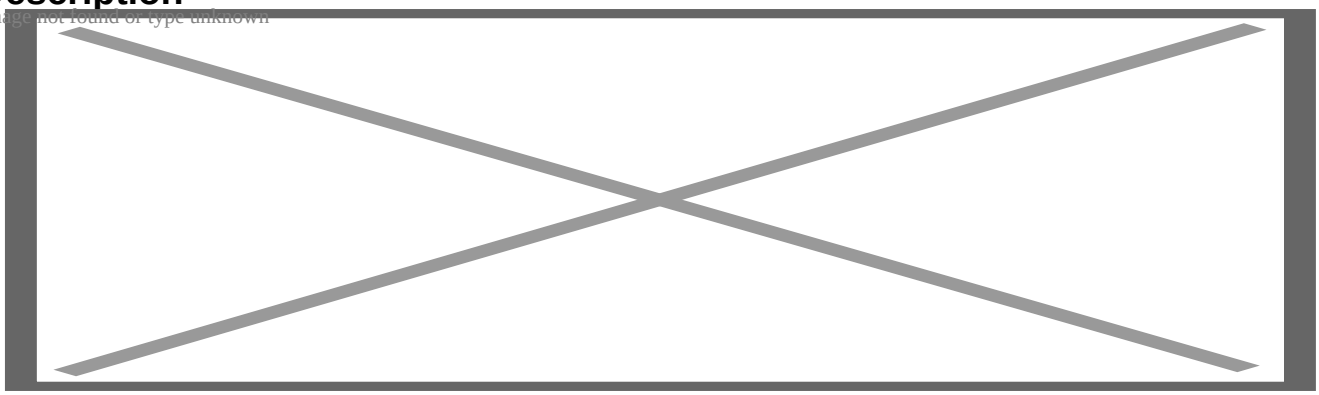
Met Office strikes gold at Computer Weekly Social Media Awards

Description

Image not found or type unknown



Last night the Met Office was crowned winner of the ‘Best Use of Social Media in the Public Sector Award’ in the Computer Weekly Social Media Awards sponsored by IBM.

The Met Office beat off stiff competition from a range of other excellent public sector organisations including South Yorkshire Police, the Government Digital Service from the Cabinet Office and Idea Street from the Department for Work and Pensions.

The award recognises our work in using social media to reach you with the latest weather and climate information when it really matters to you, including on our Twitter, Facebook and YouTube channels and of course here in this blog.

Our citation to the Computer Weekly Awards highlighted how we use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and our blog to help keep you up to date about the latest weather so that you know what to expect and how best to deal with all that the British weather can throw at us as a nation.

We are really proud that we have been recognised by you, through a public vote, for using social media in a way that we hope you find engaging, interesting and of course informative when you really need it.

Thank you and keep ‘being social’!

Date Created
November 2011

Global average temperatures continue to warm

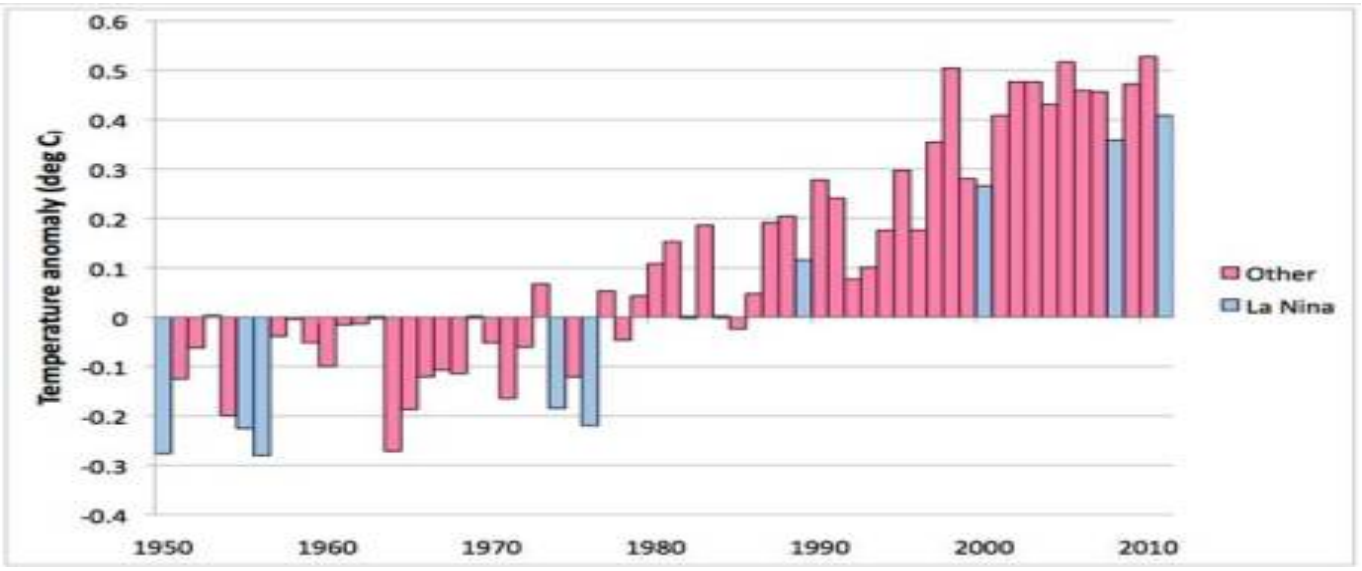
Description

WMO Press Conference on global mean temperatures in 2011

As the second day of negotiations gets underway at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP17) in Durban, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) published its review of the climate of 2011 at a press conference this morning.

With observations collated from around the world, including the Met Office Hadley Centre, the Deputy Secretary General of WMO, Jerry Lengoase stated that 2011 so far, was the 10th warmest year on record and the warmest year in which there has been a La Niña. This data was compiled by taking an average of the three global temperature data sets from NASA and NOAA, both in the US and the Met Office and University of East Anglia in the UK.

Mr Lengoase highlighted that we have observed on of the strongest La Niña events in the last 60 years. La Niña is a natural cooling of the tropical Pacific Ocean that tends to have the effect of cooling global temperatures. Despite this cooling, this year is very likely to be warmer than previous years with a La Niña, as shown in the graph below.



Graph showing global temperatures with years in which there was a La Niña highlighted in blue

The World Meteorological Organisation also announced that it will be publishing ten-year climate summaries in the spring of 2011. So far the data collected shows that no single country has reported average temperatures in the decade 2001-2010 to be cooler than long-term averages compared to the standard WMO climate reference period of 1961-2000. In addition 76 countries have reported that the 2001-2010 was in fact the warmest decade in their own national records.

The Met Office and University of East Anglia published the Met Office/UEA HADCRUT3 global temperature data used in the WMO report today, confirming that in this dataset 2011 was currently ranked 11th with a value of 14.36 deg C. NASA GISS is currently ranked 9th with a value of 14.45 and NOAA NCDC is ranked 11th with a value of 14.41 deg C.

Date Created
November 2011

Met Office in the Media – 28 November 2011

Description

Today there are stories in the media about government plans to make more data publicly accessible. While we expect an official announcement to be made tomorrow, the Met Office welcomes any move that leads to wider access to our high quality data.

We understand the power of information. Data underpins our forecasting, which is recognised as among the best in the world. Our next day temperature forecasts are accurate 87% of the time and the Met Office is consistently ranked in the top two operational forecasters in the world.

An example of this in practice came this weekend, when winds of up to 90mph swept across the north of the UK. We gave accurate guidance several days ahead of where and when these damaging winds would happen. By working with the Highways Agency, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and other agencies, we helped ensure the impacts were minimised. Protecting life and property remains at the heart of the Met Office's work and, providing that releasing more data does not compromise this, we welcome the initiative.

We recognise that access to high quality weather advice and services has huge potential to allow companies to manage the impacts and opportunities weather brings to their operations. As an example, the Met Office has recently won a €10 million contract to work with others to support aviation services across Europe. Making more of the Met Office's data available has the potential to encourage innovative new products and services, stimulating the market, creating competition and generating jobs.

Some of the stories in today's media suggest that releasing more data could be a move towards privatisation of the Met Office. However, Edward Davey, the Government Minister with responsibility for the Met Office, speaking at the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee only last month, said: "We have no plans to privatise the Met Office".

An article in The Daily Telegraph on the subject also states we got the forecast wrong for the Royal Wedding, but – as you can see from the press release issued at the time – we actually forecast sunny spells and a 10% chance of rain (which is another way of saying there's a 90% chance it will remain dry!). In terms of accurate forecasting, The Daily Telegraph themselves said we forecast snowfalls last December with "something approaching pinpoint accuracy".

Date Created
November 2011

Met Office in the Media – 25 November 2011

Description

There are a couple of interesting articles about the weather in today's press.

First of all, in the Daily Telegraph, a contradictory story with a headline which claims we shouldn't " expect a big freeze this Christmas". The introduction goes on to say the Met Office is predicting "unseasonable weather" – when actually, we are predicting normal weather for the time of year.

The Met Office quote further down the article gives a more accurate picture: "Last December saw a very prolonged period with wave after wave of cold spells and snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures. Rather than that, it looks like we're in for a mixed, unsettled December this year, with some cold spells but also milder spells."

To clarify, last year we had the coldest December in more than 100 years. The Met Office forecast for 30 days ahead, which still does not cover the whole month of December, suggests that we are unlikely to see a repeat of the persistent and extreme cold and snowy conditions that we saw last year.

Instead the current Met Office forecast is for much more normal conditions for the time of year, with periods of wind and rain interspersed with colder spells bringing some overnight frost and a chance of snow – mostly over the higher ground in Scotland. As always we will keep the British public warned and informed when severe weather is expected to affect the UK through our 5 day forecasts and our National Severe Weather Warning Service.

There's also an article in the Daily Express which suggests Scotland will be "blanketed" with snow. There has been some snowfall in Scotland overnight and this morning, but – as forecast by the Met Office – this has generally been on high ground above 400m. We are expecting further snowfalls over the next few days, but again only on the high ground in Scotland.

Date Created
November 2011

Strong winds forecast for northern parts of the UK

Description

A couple of Atlantic low pressure systems are set to pass to the north of the UK in the next few days – bringing strong winds to the country, particularly in northern Scotland. The first is swinging to the north of Scotland today and into tomorrow. The centre of this low pressure, and the strongest winds, will be well-offshore – but it's influence will still affect many areas.

In the far north west of Scotland we are expecting gusts of up to 75mph – which could bring some damage and disruption. As you travel further south those gusts will be less strong, with about 40-50mph in northern England and 20-30mph expected by the time you get to the south-east of England. A Met Office yellow warning for severe gales or storm force winds has been issued for north-western Scotland.

The low will also bring some heavyrainfall, particularly in the north of the UK, but this will be fast moving and isn't expected to bring significant amounts of rain. This may fall as snow on high ground above about 400m in Scotland – with 5-10cm of fresh snow cover in places.

A second low pressure system is set to deepen and follow a similar track, passing to the north of Scotland, on Saturday evening into Sunday morning. This will bring a repeat performance of the earlier low – with strong winds to the far north of Scotland. Gusts are currently expected to be 70+ mph in exposed areas of north Scotland, but will decrease the further south you are. It's likely winds will gust to around 45-55mph in the North of England and about 30-40mph in the south. Once again a Met Office yellow warning for severe gales or storm force winds is in force for northern and western Scotland

The second low will also bring around 5-10cm of snow on ground above 400m in Scotland, and possibly with some slushy snow at lower levels too. You can check our latest forecasts and weather warnings to get the latest updates on the forecast.

Although we're seeing two fairly deep low pressures in quick succession, this is actually not unusual for the time of year. We expect powerful Atlantic low pressures and storms to happen throughout Autumn, Winter and Spring and these often bring winds of 70mph and above. In fact, on May 23 this year we saw winds of over 115 mph across the highland peaks in Scotland.

Snow is also normal for the UK climate at this time of year. Looking at the records, you'd normally expect to see about five days of snow falling in Scotland during November. So we're actually seeing a return to more 'normal' UK weather after a long period of relatively settled and mild weather which could see this year's autumn (September, October and November) ranked as one of the warmest on record.

Date Created
November 2011

The fog blog – What is fog?

Description

With fog causing transport disruption and delays across the UK this week, there is a lot of interest in what causes this weather phenomenon.

So what is fog? The definition of fog is water droplets suspended in air – much the same as a cloud, but obviously at a lower level. The water droplets must be thick enough to reduce visibility to 1,000 metres or less. If visibility is higher than that, then it's officially mist (there's no upper limit for visibility for mist).

Fog forms when relatively moist and mild air close to the ground cools quickly, causing the moisture in the air to condense (at which point it becomes visible to the human eye). This normally happens in autumn and winter under clear skies, which allows heat from the ground to escape quickly to cause rapid temperature drops. Winds need to be light too, otherwise the fog will be dispersed.

Fog can also be formed in other ways, such as when warm, moist air moves over a cold ocean – something that's more common in the UK spring when air temperatures increase but the ocean is still cold. It's exactly the same process, but the cooling is effected in a different way.

The thickness of fog (or mist) will be determined by the amount of moisture (humidity) of the air and the amount of time the air cools for – the more time, the thicker the fog. Obviously fog can get very thick, and anything less than 100 metres would be considered thick fog.

Met Office weather forecasts

Met Office Severe Weather Warnings

What to do in severe weather

Date Created
November 2011

Very mild start to November

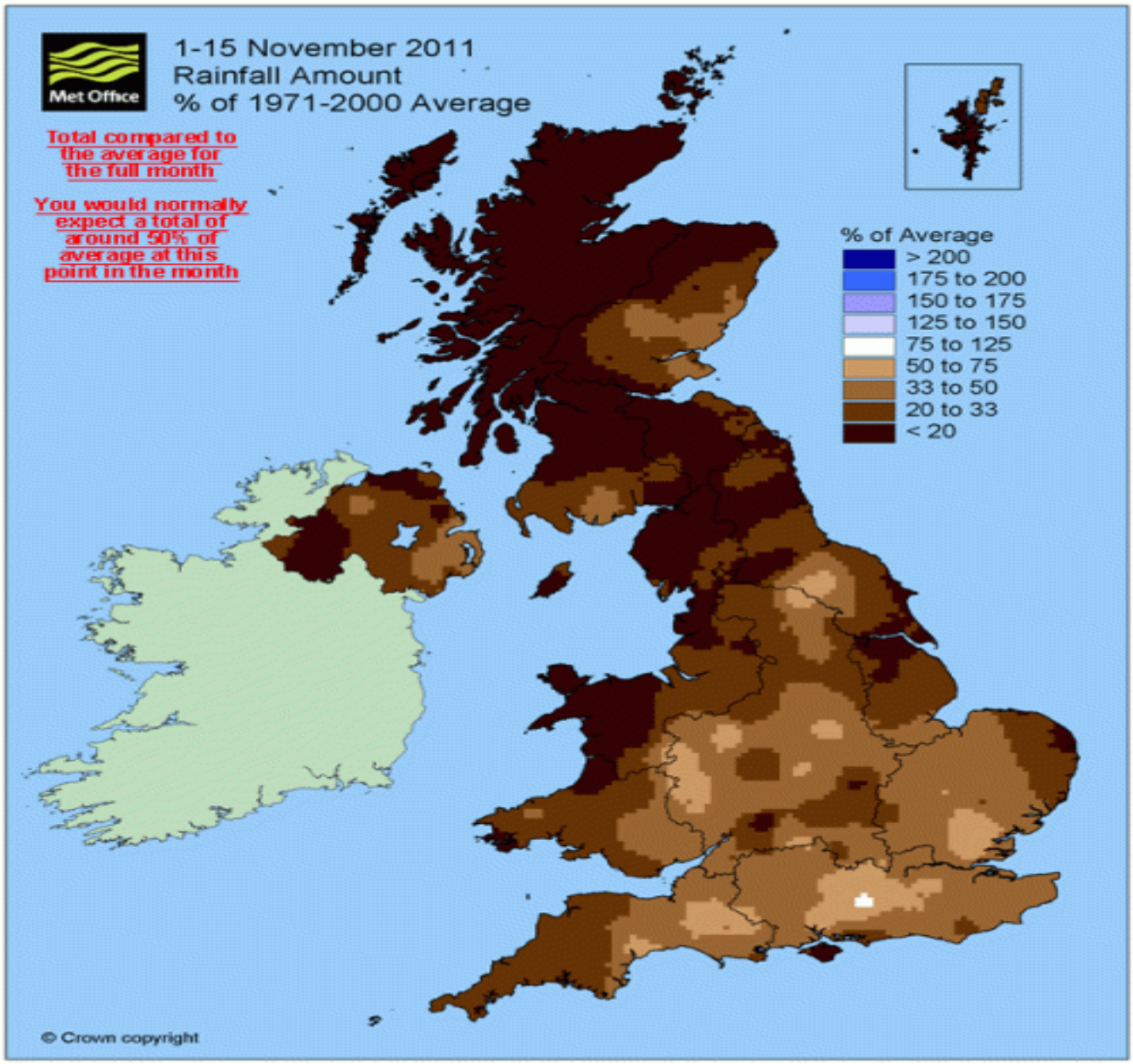
Description

The first part of November has been very mild, dry and quite sunny across the UK, according to provisional Met Office climate figures.

The UK average temperature for 1-15 November was 9.4 °C, which is 3.5 °C higher than the long term average. The warmest district of the UK so far this month has been East Anglia where the average temperature was 11.2 °C, some 4.5 °C above the long term average for the area.

We would normally expect the first half of November to be warmer than the second as we transition towards winter (which, meteorologically speaking, starts in December). However, even bearing this in mind, the temperatures seen in the first half of this month have been much warmer than normal.

Rainfall amounts have been well below normal across the UK for the first half of the month. The UK has seen 25.6mm of rain so far which is well below the level you would expect at the mid point of the month. Northern Scotland has seen the driest weather with just 10.9mm of rain being recorded, a mere 6% of the monthly average.


1-15 November 2011
Rainfall Amount
% of 1971-2000 Average
Met Office
Total compared to the average for the full month
You would normally expect a total of around 50% of average at this point in the month
% of Average
> 200
175 to 200
150 to 175
125 to 150
75 to 125
50 to 75
33 to 50
20 to 33
< 20
© Crown copyright

Rainfall 1-15 November 2011

As you might expect from the low rainfall amounts we have also seen a fair amount of sunshine during the first half of the month. The UK has seen 61% of average for the month with 35.9 hours and Northern Ireland has seen a full months worth of sunshine in the first 15 days with 55.4 hours.

	Average temperature		Sunshine hours		Rainfall	
Location	**1-15 Nov 2011**	**Difference from 71-00 monthly average**	**1-15 Nov 2011**	**Percentage of 71-00 monthly average**	**1-15 Nov 2011**	**Percentage of 71-00 monthly average**
UK	9.4 °C	3.5°C	35.9	61 %	25.6 mm	22 %

England	10.2 °C	3.8 °C	29.2	45 %	26.9mm	32 %
Wales	9.5 °C	3.0 °C	43.5	75 %	36.3 mm	23 %
Scotland	8.1 °C	3.4 °C	41.3	86 %	20.3 mm	12 %
Northern Ireland	9.0 °C	2.9 °C	55.4	100 %	27.7 mm	25 %

For the UK, the warmest November on record was 1994 with an average temperature of 8.8C; and the driest was in 1945 when 22.1 mm fell.

However, with more than two weeks of weather still to come and temperatures expected to return to more normal levels before the month is out, it’s too early to say where this November will sit in the record books.

Date Created
November 2011

Unusually dry weather in 2011

Description

There has been a marked lack of rainfall across parts of the UK this year, with some areas seeing their driest January to October period on record. The Midlands and East Anglia have been particularly badly affected, but the whole of the south of the country is well down on normal rainfall levels.

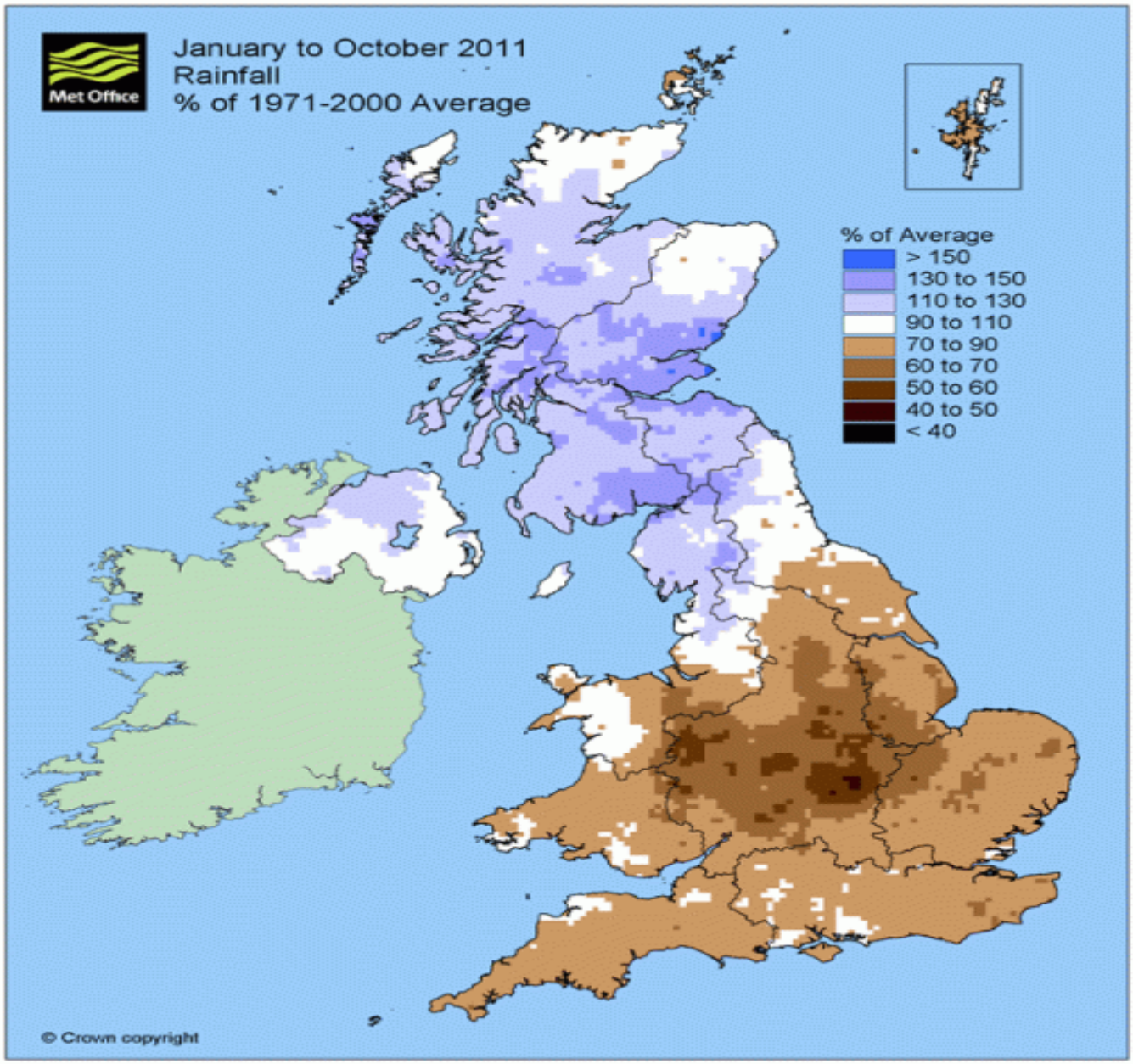
Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Rutland and Shropshire have all had their driest first ten months of the year in the Met Office records, which go back to at 1910. Each of those counties has had just over 60% of the normal amount of rainfall we would expect for the period.

Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Huntingdonshire and Worcestershire are not far behind, as they have all notched up totals which are the second or third driest in the records.

There is no specific reason for this year's dry weather across the south – it is just down to the natural variability in the conditions we expect to see. This year we have seen long spells influenced by a 'blocking pattern', particularly in Spring and during this Autumn. This is where a high pressure over Europe – and close to the UK– blocks the weather systems which come in off the Atlantic, sending them further to the north. These weather systems usually bring rain with them – so when they're blocked, we see less rainfall.

The counterpart of this is that areas on the edge of the blocking pattern can see higher than average rainfall, as the weather systems are regularly pushed past the same area. This is why some parts of Scotland have seen unusually wet conditions. For example, Dumfriesshire, Clackmannanshire, and Fifeshire have all seen their third wettest January to October periods in the records – all having 30-40% more rain than you would expect.

District / Region	Jan–Oct total	1971-2000 Average	% of Average	Comment
Northamptonshire	308.4	530.8	58	Driest since 1929, 3rd driest in series
Leicestershire	326.9	540.1	61	Driest in series
Warwickshire	325.9	552.7	61	Driest in series
Rutland	328.7	533.5	62	Driest in series
Shropshire	382.6	620.1	62	Driest in series
Nottinghamshire	322.3	510.7	63	Driest since 1959, 2nd driest in series
Huntingdonshire	297.0	463.7	64	Driest since 1929, 3rd driest in series
Worcestershire	355.4	550.5	65	Driest since 1921, 3rd driest in series



Date Created
November 2011

Met Office short-listed for Computer Weekly Social Media Award

Description

Click on the image to vote for the Met Office in the Computer Weekly Social Media Awards

Image not found or type unknown
Click on the image to vote for the Met Office in the Computer Weekly Social Media Awards

Computer Weekly's search for the best use of social media in IT is back for its fourth year, in association with IBM, and this blog along with the range of Met Office Social Media we provide has been short-listed for an the 'Best use of Social Media in the Public Sector' category. Our Twitter channels, Facebook, YouTube pages and News Blog have been shortlisted for providing you with the latest news and information on all things weather and climate 'when it matters'.

So if you enjoy what we are doing across all of our social media channels follow the link and **vote for the Met Office – Social Media 'When it Matters'.**

Social Media 'When it Matters'

We use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and our blog to help keep you up to date about the latest weather so that you know what to expect and how best to deal with all that the British weather can throw at us as a nation.

The Met Office is a world leader in weather and climate services and through our social media channels, we're reaching over 75,000 people every month so that we can explain our science and keep people up to date with the latest weather news.

During times of severe weather, we use social media for communicating messages quickly and raising awareness. When hurricane Katia crossed the Atlantic, reaching the UK as a post-tropical storm in September, we kept you up to date, day and night, though Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and our blog, Through our 24/7 Twitter presence we were able to provide reassurance and updates on current conditions. Our messages were retweeted many times, helping us to reach an even larger audience.

We produced and issued two YouTube forecasts directly from our forecasters to update you on the progress of the storm – these were promoted through our Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as embedded into our traditional media channels and were watched over 65,000 times.

Thanks to your support, over the last 12 months we have integrated operational 24/7 social media into our communications mix, reaching over 75,000 people every month through our social media channels.

Through active, engaging informative and relevant communications we have increased twitter followers by over 100% and have seen a 1000% increase in engagement. Our Facebook fans have increased by 400% over the same period. We also get three times more visitors to our blog than the same time last year.

You can vote ate at the Computer Weekly Social Media Awards page.

Date Created
November 2011

Met Office in the Media: 14 November 2011

Description

There have been a number of reports in the media this morning that this 'November is set to be the warmest on record'. This story is based on figures for temperatures from the Central England Temperature record up to only the 12th of November. Although it is safe to say that we have seen, as forecast by the Met Office, milder conditions so far this November, it is just too early to say if this November will break any records.

Like October, November tends to be a month of contrast. When looking at climatology the end of the month tends to being significantly cooler than the beginning. Typically maximum temperatures range from 7 to 12 degrees C in the first 10 days compared to 5 to 10 degrees C in the last 12 days of November. Therefore it is not unusual to see a milder start when figures are compared to the month as a whole.

When it comes to climate statistics it is important to make sure that you are comparing like with like. As the National Weather Service for the UK, having responsibility for the national climate record we take our role seriously and ensure that when comparisons are made these are based on the best science and information available. Although these reports are based on our data, the interpretation is not that of the Met Office.

As we head through the rest of the month we will provide information as it becomes available. You can find daily weather information and weather forecasts up to 30 days ahead on the Met Office website.

Related articles

- November on course for being warmest since records began (telegraph.co.uk)
- You: UK on course for mildest November in 300 years (guardian.co.uk)

Date Created
November 2011

Met Office in the Media: 11 November 2011

Description

It is has been a busy week for the Met Office in the media this week. It started with the broadcast of "Will it Snow?" on BBC2 last weekend. This programme looked at the challenges of forecasting severe weather and explained the science of weather forecasting. The programme, which included several interviews with the Met Office has been positively received across a number of outlets.

On Wednesday, following evidence by Edward Davey to the Science and Technology Select Committee, several news pieces ran on the work of the Met Office and the resources needed to support our world-leading weather forecasting capability. The BBC reported that the 'Met Office more powerful computers', whilst others reported on the work we have been doing to explore the use of probabilities in weather forecasts. Regular readers of this blog will be aware of the study we undertook using an online game to explore how people use probability information and others have reported on our use of probabilities of rainfall and temperature range forecasts on our new beta website. The Mail, Telegraph and Yahoo News all reported on this. Mike Hanlon wrote a very interesting piece in his blog about the use of probabilities entitled 'New weather forecasts show just how far the Met Office has come'.

Related articles

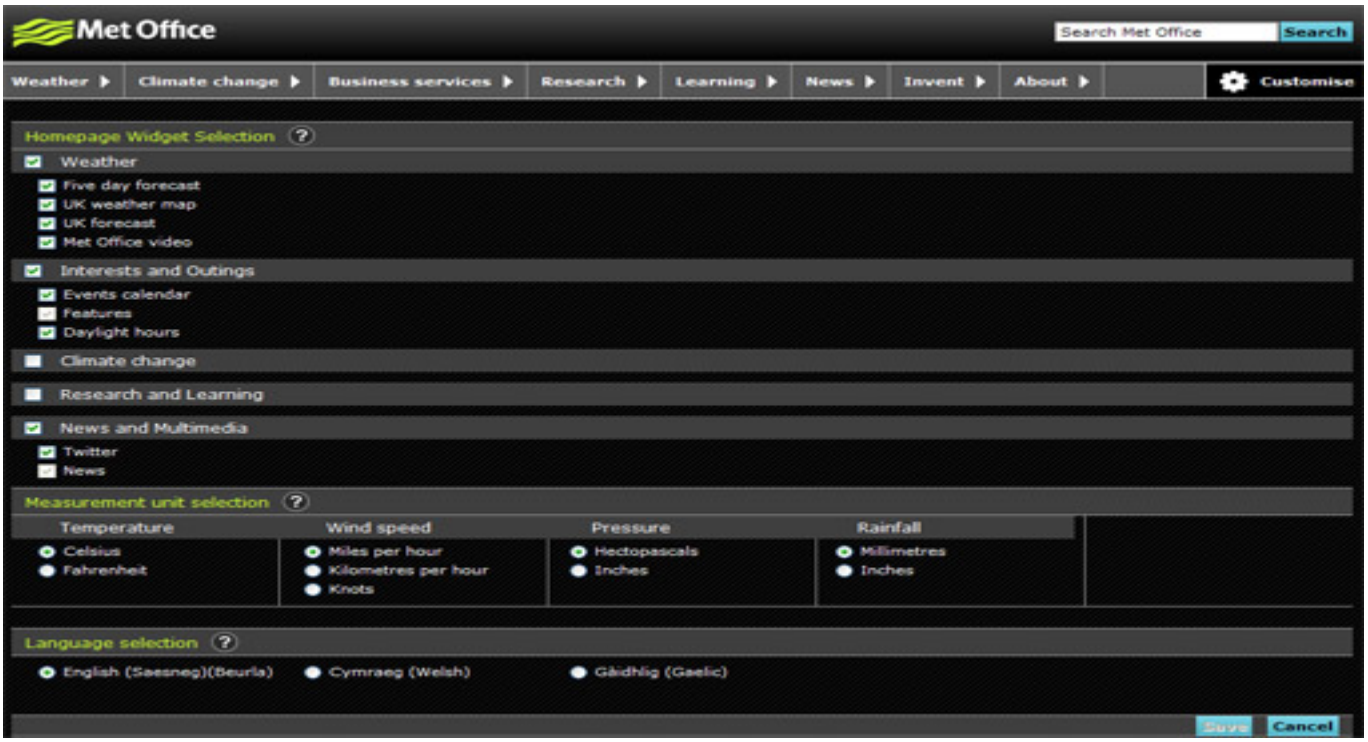
- Chance of a shower? You decide, as Met Office launches new style weather forecasts (telegraph.co.uk)
- 'Clear case' for Met Office boost (bbc.co.uk)
- Met Office 'needs top computers' (bbc.co.uk)

Date Created
November 2011

Customising your home page on the Met Office beta site

Description

The new Met Office beta website allows you to customise the content you see, the location of weather forecasts and observations and display of the homepage. To start customising, click on the customise icon in the top right hand corner of the homepage.



Choose what content is displayed

You can switch off content you're not interested in by unticking the boxes in the customise panel. You can also click the x in the corner of the widget box to remove it from view.

Choose your units

Choose the units you'd like to see on your weather reports for temperature, wind speed, pressure and rainfall in the customise panel.

Choose your location

Click on 'change' in the five day weather forecast map to change your location, you'll then be given the option to use your chosen location across the whole site.

Choose your layout

You can drag widgets around the homepage and position them where you like. You can also contract

and expand widgets using the triangle icon at the top of each widget.

Choose your language

You can now opt for English, Welsh or Gaelic.

We'd love to know how you're finding the new website, you can leave us a comment on this post or send your feedback via our feedback form.

Related articles

- New Met Office beta website (metofficenews.wordpress.com)

Date Created
November 2011